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**Council votes down legislation to refer a Title II referendum measure**

**WINDOW ROCK** – On the third day of the Winter Session, Council voted down Legislation No. 0369-12, which sought to refer a referendum measure that would have amended Title II of the Navajo Nation Code if the measure was voted on and approved by a majority of eligible registered voters who cast a vote.

In his opening remarks to Council, legislation sponsor Council Delegate Jonathan Nez (Shonto, Navajo Mountain, Oljato, Ts'ah Bii Kin) said that the proposed changes to Title II were intended to empower Navajo People and to restore their trust and confidence in the government.

The proposed referendum measure was one of three measures approved by the Commission on Navajo Government Development through a resolution passed on June 23, 2012.

One proposed change stated that the Navajo people delegate to the Navajo Nation Council the authority, subject to certain limitations, to legislate on behalf of the Navajo Nation. Another proposed change asserted that the power and authority to govern the Navajo Nation originates from the Navajo People.

"Some have asked if [the legislation] means we as delegates don't need to be here to vote and if everything should be voted on by the people. No, this is to say it's through the people we are given that authority," explained Delegate Nez.

Council Delegate Russell Begaye (Shiprock) argued that the legislation would not truly empower Navajo People and suggested that a more comprehensive proposal be developed to allow the people to choose their form of government through a referendum.

"I agree with the wordings, but they should've brought the entire package together," said Delegate Begaye. "To me it's just good words, just rhetoric. We're not really giving the power to the people."

Council Delegate Mel Begay (Coyote Canyon, Mexican Springs, Naschitti, Tohatchi, Bahastl'a'a') said the legislation needs further development to provide future leadership with more guidance.

"It needs a little more work and it needs direction and the Commission on Navajo Government Development failed in its thought process by putting a fraction of language in," said Delegate Begaye. "The way this is set up, there's very minimal guidance."

At the conclusion of the lengthy discussion, Council voted down the legislation with a vote of 8-9.

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